

Monticello CUSD #25

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

December 18, 2012

Commission on High School Graduation Achievement and Success

The Commission has received a good number of intervention and drop-out reduction recommendations and has considered and discussed them at our meeting held today. Several members made comments about front-end assistance in order that students are better prepared for school at the start. One recommendation encouraged schools to establish goals to ensure that students can read by the end of third grade. My comments and recommendations serve to highlight the area of preschool and efforts to improve student readiness via the expansion of pre-school programs in public schools.

I would recommend the expansion of the Preschool for All Program in Illinois. Funds were cut a few years ago and a good number of public school districts lost funding during this time. Many school districts that had been a part of the Early Childhood Block Grant lost funding due to grant variables that considered district property values, low income ratios, and racial diversity. A good number of these districts have had to cut or shrink these programs due to the loss of funding that came through this round of grants. Some of the best dollars spent on education are those spent at the front-end to prepare our students for school. The PFA grant had for years and continues to fund non-public school programs in for-profit day care centers. This is another area that should be re-considered. These funds could be used to expand public school programming.

I would recommend easing the requirements of Head Start in order to allow for easier collaboration between public schools and these programs. We have met several times with our local Head Start Program to determine if a more collaborative effort could be achieved between our programs. We have even offered to house the program in our school, hire the teacher, and run the program in order to make it look like and work like our current pre-school programming. Such collaboration would increase the total number of students accessing pre-school services and better prepare them for Kindergarten. We have found that many roadblocks exist related to facilities, transportation, and programming that dissuade such a collaborative effort.

I would encourage the inclusion of a recommendation related to the front-end (pre-school) side of the high school success equation be included in our report.

Vic Zimmerman
Superintendent of Schools